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# UNDP: COUNTRY COOPERATION FRAMEWORKS AND RELATED MATTERS

## FIRST COUNTRY COOPERATION FRAMEWORK FOR MAURITANIA (1997-2001)

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The first country cooperation framework (CCF) for Mauritania, covering the period 1997-2001, is the result of a lengthy process of preparation and consultations between the Government and UNDP, which was organized and expanded in particular through the February 1996 mid-term review of the fourth country programme and the second seminar (June 1996) on the sustainable human development initiative in Mauritania held under the auspices of the Ministry of Planning. In addition to these consultations, the national strategies and priorities indicated in the economic policy framework document for 1996-1998 and the report on the national poverty reduction strategy provided the basic frame of reference for the formulation of the CCF for Mauritania. The country strategy note and the UNDP advisory note drafted in October 1996 were also used.

2. The preparation and presentation to the Government of the UNDP advisory note was a particularly important step in the process of elaborating the country cooperation framework (1997-2001), because on that occasion, UNDP had the benefit of the advice and comments of the national authorities and other development partners. Thus, once the priority areas had been identified, the measures and arrangements proposed in the note dovetailed perfectly with the Government's concerns. The Government decided to centre its medium- and long-term national development policy on poverty reduction, protection of the environment and good governance.

## I. DEVELOPMENT SITUATION FROM A SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

3. Mauritania has launched a series of economic adjustment programmes since 1985 which have allowed it to correct macroeconomic imbalances and establish favourable conditions for sustained growth. Consequently, during the period 1993-1995, growth rose to 4.8 per cent in real terms, price stability was restored and budgetary imbalances and external accounts were substantially reduced. This satisfactory economic performance led to major improvements in education, health and human development.

### The problem of poverty

4. Despite the encouraging progress achieved in the economic sphere, the problem of poverty continues to affect over half the population. In 1990, about 57 per cent of households were classified as below the poverty line (an annual per capital income of $375) and 48 per cent below the threshold for extreme poverty (annual per capita income of $275).

5. Low life expectancy (51.8 years in 1995), persistent illiteracy (60 per cent in 1995), widespread unemployment, inability to meet nutritional needs and continuing inadequate access to basic social services were the principal indicators of poverty.

Employment

6. Despite economic growth of 4.8 per cent in 1995, 26 per cent of the work force is unemployed. The current job market situation is still characterized by a rural exodus and the new phenomenon of unemployment among school graduates.

Environment

7. Recurring drought and desertification have had damaging effects on social organization for production, which leads to impoverishment in rural areas and exacerbates the rural exodus. To combat that scourge and ensure sustainable development, the Government has strengthened its institutional capacity by implementing multisectorial strategic approaches to environmental management and natural resources. However, the Government is concerned about other major aspects, including the urban environment, preservation of the marine ecosystem and shoreline conservation.

Status of women

8. Despite reforms aimed at integrating women into the development process, their participation in decision-making and politics still remains low (3 per cent women candidates in the October 1996 legislative elections). The health of women and their children also remains a concern for various reasons (inadequate health care, malnutrition). Maternal mortality, despite a significant reduction from a rate of 800 to 300 per hundred thousand live births between 1990 and 1995, remains the major cause of death for women between the ages of 15 and 45.

Governance

9. Major improvements were still needed in several aspects of governance, despite considerable progress in that area. In particular, the administrative reform must be completed, smooth operation of democratic institutions ensured, an ethic of public service and collective interest established, freedom of the press strengthened and the role and participation of civil society defined.

## II. RESULTS AND LESSONS OF PAST COOPERATION

10. In the fourth country programme (1993-1996), the Government had given preference to UNDP support in two priority areas: on the one hand, rural development, food security and environment, and on the other, human resources development and poverty reduction. The results and impact of the fourth programme were confirmed in February 1996 during the mid-term review, where sustainable human development and poverty reduction were retained as strategic guidelines for the next country programme for Mauritania.

11. In the area of programme implementation, Mauritania has favoured the modality of national execution, which has yielded encouraging results that are worth continuing. To that end, improvements will be sought in order to consolidate follow-up in the financial and accounting spheres and define more clearly the responsibilities of national directors. With regard to the

programme approach, the experience of the two framework programmes has been conclusive.

## III. GOVERNMENT STRATEGY FOR COOPERATION WITH UNDP

12. The economic reforms undertaken since 1990 have begun to show results, particularly at the level of macroeconomic balances. Thus, during the period 1993-1995, the economic growth rate rose to 4.8 per cent in real terms, inflation was reduced to 6 per cent for 1995 and a budgetary surplus of $15.3 million was recorded for that year. Along with these encouraging results, major deficits remain in respect of unemployment and infant mortality.

### National strategy note

13. This Government strategy for cooperation with UNDP is also based on the content and approach selected in the national strategy note which the Government formulated and approved at the end of 1996. The Government opted for "poverty reduction" as the unifying theme of the national strategy note around which the specific contributions of United Nations bodies should be organized and their activities structured. The role and activities of UNDP in this context have focused on poverty reduction, environmental protection, the advancement of women, and support for good governance. Lastly, the note referred to the need for these bodies to situate their support and programmes in the context of the implementation of the recommendations of recent conferences and world summit meetings and the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa.

### Government strategy for the utilization of UNDP resources

14. With the trend towards a decline in official development assistance, the Government would like UNDP resources to play a role as a catalyst coordinator and promoter of national capacities in order to channel the highest possible level of resources and programmes to support Mauritania's economic and social policies. This support will reinforce a national sustainable human development policy designed to make the improvement of living conditions the goal of all development policies. In this area, the Government wishes to take advantage of the experience acquired by UNDP in carrying out the sustainable human development initiative launched at the national level in mid-1995. The Government therefore wishes to use UNDP resources to make the sustainable human development approach operational in Mauritania in four areas: (a) the establishment of a national sustainable human development network accessible to civil society; (b) the annual publication of a national human development report; (c) the establishment of a national sustainable human development observatory; and, lastly, (d) the formulation of a national sustainable human development strategy to guide national development policies in the years to come.

15. In the area of poverty reduction, the Government plans to use UNDP resources as follows: (a) first, to help learn more about poverty in Mauritania (zones, target groups), since the lack of information and absence of data and appropriate statistical tools are undermining the activities of the Government and its development partners; (b) to evaluate existing economic and social

strategies and policies in order to focus their component programmes more fully on poverty reduction. In this context, the reallocation of budgetary resources towards the most vulnerable sectors (rural, education, private) will be encouraged; (c) to strengthen national capacities (central level, decentralized level), both public and private, responsible for the implementation of the national poverty reduction strategy and plan of action. The follow-up and evaluation capacities of policies and programmes at the decentralized level will receive particular support; (d) to promote and strengthen the Mauritanian community movement (non-governmental organizations, community organizations) and the private sector to enable them to play the roles expected of them, particularly in poverty reduction.

## IV. PRIORITY AREAS

16. On the basis of the development prospects of the national economy and analyses of the situation of sustainable human development, three priority areas have been identified within the context of country cooperation for 1997-2001. They are: (a) poverty reduction; (b) environmental management and conservation; and (c) governance.

17. In relation to these three priority areas, two major cross-cutting themes will be taken into account in the form of specific operations or components of a given sub-programme. They are national capacity-building and human resource development, and the advancement of women.

### Priority area 1: poverty reduction

18. UNDP support in the implementation of a poverty reduction programme will have to be integrated into the national poverty reduction strategy and its plan of action. In this respect, UNDP support should be directed towards the implementation of a framework programme for poverty reduction, with the following components:

(a) Support for capacity-building and policy implementation. This component is designed to refine the national poverty reduction strategy through the implementation of follow-up and evaluation mechanisms. To that end, basic social data will be updated and success criteria will be improved in order to reorient policies and programmes and serve as a starting point for the sustainable human development observatory. This component will be particularly concerned with the implementation of employment policy, emphasizing follow-up and evaluation;

(b) Support for the private sector. The aim of this component is to promote and reinforce the private sector, especially through support for the establishment of a framework of incentives and regulations (investments code, customs regime, business law) and a capacity-building programme (training for private entrepreneurs, trade information, management support, assistance to the informal sector). This component will supplement support from donors, particularly from the World Bank.

(c) These components will be accompanied by direct support for poverty reduction such as: (i) the creation of highly labour-intensive socio-productive infrastructures in rural and peri-urban areas; (ii) the implementation of income-generating activities through microfinancing for the acquisition of start-up capital for 80 peri-urban and rural women's cooperatives benefiting about 500 women; (iii) the consolidation of the institutional framework for the coordination and implementation of poverty reduction programmes; (iv) the strengthening of food security through the enhancement of agricultural production and productivity in rural areas, the rehabilitation of urban agriculture, primarily in Nouakchott, and access to drinking water in rural and peri-urban areas and its utilization for productive activities. Seven wilayas (administrative regions) will be involved at the level of 100 villages or grass-roots communities.

Priority area 2: environment

19. The national environmental priorities are aimed at combating desertification, making rational use of natural resources, and environmental management.

20. UNDP will assist the Government in the implementation of its sustainable development strategy by helping it to develop an action programme (a national version of Agenda 21) and to incorporate it into the national planning process. The most important elements of this action programme will be:

(a) Combating desertification. In Mauritania, combating desertification remains an integral part of poverty reduction activities, since desertification poses a constant threat to water points, human settlements, factors of production such as dams and arable land, the social and production infrastructures and, accordingly, the survival of the population. The subprogramme is intended to support the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, which Mauritania has recently ratified. Actions to combat desertification will be identified in the national plan of action.

(b) Making rational use of natural resources. UNDP support is sought in order to: (i) protect and reduce the pressure of development on forest resources and provide support for alternatives involving renewable energy sources; (ii) mitigate and reduce problems stemming from the overexploitation of groundwater in oasis zones and the salinization of the Trarza aquifer which supplies the capital with safe drinking water; (iii) identify and implement the actions necessary to abate the environmental consequences of bringing the Diama and Mannantali dams into operation.

(c) Environmental management. In the area of environmental protection, UNDP resources will be sought for the preparation and implementation of: (i) an urban environmental management plan that addresses issues linked to sanitation and the treatment of sewage and wastes; (ii) a coastal development plan.

21. Global Environment Facility (GEF) resources will be sought for the elaboration of strategies and an action plan and the implementation of projects

and programmes designed to fulfil the goals and commitments embodied in the conventions on climate change and biodiversity and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

Priority area 3: Governance

22. The national priorities in the area of good governance are aimed at human resources development and the strengthening of the national capacity to formulate, manage and implement sustainable human development policies and programmes at both the national and local levels. Follow-up and verification and the smooth functioning of the judicial system are also aspects of good governance to which the Government attaches special importance.

23. In this area, consideration should be given to a long-term national programme which will have three specific components:

(a) Reform of the government administration. UNDP support is sought for the following actions: (i) the design and implementation of an administrative modernization strategy. This strategy, based on an evaluation of the civil service reform, should take into account the changing role of the State, the promotion of the private sector and the emerging role of other agents in civil society (municipalities, non-governmental organizations, etc.); (ii) the strengthening of national capacity for supporting the public resources management programme, which is aimed at improving economic management and the capacity to analyse and implement development policies.

The performance indicators will consist of support for the implementation of the staff training and appraisal plan for the key ministries, an evaluation of the civil service reform and an administrative modernization strategy.

(b) Strengthening of the institutions and organizations of civil society. UNDP action is envisaged for the promotion of: (i) decentralization, by strengthening the capacity of local authorities (municipalities) to manage, plan and coordinate development activities; (ii) legislative and senatorial institutions, in the area of training and documentation; (iii) the organizations of civil society (non-governmental organizations, the private sector, human rights organizations, etc.) through actions to strengthen the organizational, coordinating and communication structures.

The performance indicators for this component consist of the training of local authorities in three regions of the country in the use of instruments for managing, planning and coordinating development activities; an annual on-site training session for 27 deputies so as to encompass the entire membership of the two chambers by the end of the programme; and the establishment of the Senate/Parliament documentation centre and training of its staff.

(c) Support for monitoring and verification activities and the smooth functioning of the judicial system. UNDP support is envisaged with regard to: (i) evaluating the functions of the various institutions which participate in the monitoring of public finances with a view to contributing to a precise definition of their functions; (ii) strengthening the capacity of the monitoring and verification structures (General Accounting Office, Inspectorate of

Finances, Treasury); (iii) supporting the legislative and regulatory framework and the reform of the judicial system.

## V. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

24. Programme execution and implementation. In accordance with the recommendations contained in General Assembly resolution 44/211 of 22 December 1989, Mauritania will adopt the programme approach in respect of the formulation and implementation of the framework programmes of the current country programme. To this end, recourse by Mauritania to innovative methods of carrying out and managing activities in the priority areas will require: (a) substantial strengthening of government and UNDP resources with a view to improved control over the stages of identification, follow-up and evaluation of the actions enumerated in the selected priority areas; (b) strengthening of national technical and administrative capacity through personnel training activities. National execution will include execution by both the Government and non-public national organizations (the private sector and non-governmental organizations).

25. National execution. The mid-term review of the fourth country programme took positive note of the gradual establishment of the capacity for ongoing national execution. This process should continue where local capabilities exist. Experience has shown, however, that there is still room for improvement and that the existing national capacity must be analysed correctly.

26. For the next programme, with a view to ensuring that programmes and projects are executed properly, Mauritania seeks the implementation of a national programme to strengthen execution and implementation capacity through the holding of training sessions in the context of national execution, particularly on questions relating to the new arrangements.

27. Follow-up and evaluation. The steering committee responsible for guidelines and programming of activities and the coordination unit responsible for integrating subprogrammes into the administrative and financial plans will soon be strengthened through the establishment of a joint Government/UNDP unit on operational issues, which was strongly recommended in the mid-term review of the fourth country programme.

28. Monitoring and evaluation will be based on current UNDP procedures. The aim, in particular, will be to formulate a three-year rolling financial plan to serve as the primary framework for financial monitoring in terms of both UNDP and non-UNDP resources. A mid-term review of the programme will be conducted. At the local level, the statutory documents deriving from this country cooperation framework will be submitted to a local review committee involving the participation of local agencies of the United Nations system, bilateral and multilateral programmes and civil society. Lastly, the success criteria identified in this document will serve as a benchmark for evaluating the country cooperation framework.

29. Resource mobilization. To implement its programmes, Mauritania will emphasize a strategy for mobilizing both internal UNDP funds and external funds

from its development partners. In particular, the resource mobilization strategy will focus on the effective mobilization of internal resources (United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), Office to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNSO), Global Environment Facility (GEF), Capacity 21, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Volunteers) and external resources through cost-sharing arrangements with Mauritania's bilateral partners. The formulation of quality programmes to strengthen sustainable human development in Mauritania, together with increased absorption capacity, should facilitate access to UNDP resources.

30. The other resource mobilization modalities will be pursued in close cooperation with UNDP, inter alia, in the areas of management service agreements, debt conversion, effective mobilization of counterpart resources for programmes and projects and cost-sharing arrangements (foreign exchange and/or local currency). In particular, certain partners will be approached by virtue of the convergence and complementarity of the programmes to be implemented. These include Canada, the African Development Bank, the European Union, Germany and the World Bank in the area of poverty reduction, the Caisse française de développement in the area of promoting wind energy and the Mission française de coopération in the area of financing small-scale projects and supporting parliamentary institutions. Mauritania will also make use of non-programme funds and other special funds (Special Programme Resources, Poverty Strategy Initiative, Norwegian Trust Fund for Governance in Africa) for the formulation of framework programmes in the priority areas already identified.

31. Resource mobilization in the amounts targeted for the country cooperation framework will aim, in the initial phase, for a ceiling of $4,788,000 for TRAC 1, which will be reserved for ongoing programmes in priority areas. TRAC 1 represents 30 per cent of total resources ($15,938,000). In the second phase, based on the quality of the programmes submitted, an amount of $5,323,000 will be mobilized under TRAC 2.

32. For direct cost-sharing, an amount of $300,000 is targeted; for third-party cost-sharing, Mauritania, in cooperation with UNDP, will seek to mobilize $1 million, in view of the actual presence, at the local level, of traditional donors to Mauritania.

33. In the area of parallel financing, an amount of $26 million is targeted for the implementation of programmes in areas of convergence (UNDP/development partners). In terms of internal resources administered by UNDP, Mauritania will aim for $9,750,000, primarily from UNCDF, UNSO, GEF, UNIFEM and other sources (Special Programme Resources, Poverty Strategy Initiative).

Annex

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION TARGET TABLE (1997-2001)

(In thousands of United States dollars)

| Source | Amount | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| UNDP CORE FUNDS | | |
| IPF carry-over | 100 | Situation as of 5/10/96 |
| TRAC 1.1.1 | 4 788 | 60% of allocations |
| TRAC 1.1.2 | 5 323 | 66.7% to be mobilized on the basis of future programmes |
| Other resources | | In line with decision 95/23, paragraph 19. |
| SPPD/STS | | |
| Subtotal | 4 888[a] | |
| NON-CORE FUNDS | | |
| Government cost-sharing | 300 | |
| Sustainable development funds:<br>- GEF<br>- UNSO | <br>2 500<br>500 | |
| Third-party cost-sharing | 1 000 | |
| Funds, trust funds and other:<br>- UNCDF<br>- UNIFEM<br>- SPR[b] | <br>6 000<br>250<br>500 | |
| Subtotal | 11 050 | |
| GRAND TOTAL | 15 938[a] | |

[a] Not inclusive of TRAC 1.1.2, which is allocated regionally for subsequent country application.

[b] SPR allocated to the Poverty Strategy Initiative.

Abbreviations: IPF = indicative planning figure; SPPD = support for policy and programme development; SPR = special programme resources; STS = support for technical services; TRAC = target for resource assignments from the core; UNSO = Office to Combat Desertification and Drought.

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